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SUBJECT: KATHMANDU MEETING AGREES ON PLANS TO HELP TIGERS
AVOID EXTINCTION

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11. (U) Summary: More than 200 tiger experts, government representatives and non-governmental organizations met in Kathmandu October 27-30 to consider how to reverse the alarming reduction of tigers in the wild in the last hundred years from 100,000 to about 3,500. The World Bank and the government of Nepal sponsored the meeting, which was attended by 13 countries with tiger habitats. Along with proposals for tiger conservation, the group recommended that during the Chinese year of the tiger, 2010 should be used to raise public awareness on the species' plight. End Summary.

12. (U) The World Bank and the government of Nepal sponsored the meeting and an opening speech from Nepali Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal and recorded video remarks from Bank President Robert Zoellick both stressed the need for urgent action to prevent tigers from disappearing from the wild. After hearing reports from range states and discussion of best practices and needed changes in conservation practices

and habitat preservation, the group recommended that 2010, the Chinese year of the tiger, should be celebrated by raising public awareness of the critical plight of the tiger and enlisting support for measures to ensure its survival in the wild. North Korea did not attend, but present at the meeting were representatives of all of tiger range states (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Nepal, Russia, Thailand, and Vietnam).

13. (U) The meeting agreed on comprehensive proposals for tiger conservation, including strict protection of tigers and prevention of infrastructure development in core breeding areas; giving local communities in and near tiger habitats sustainable economic incentives to minimize tiger-human conflict; and creating sustainable mechanism to finance wild tiger conservation. Other recommendations included focused public outreach to reduce demand for tiger parts and more effective enforcement and international cooperation in combating illegal trade in wildlife. In support of another recommendation, the development of regional cooperation for management and enforcement, Nepal agreed to be the site of the long-planned South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (which it terms the wildlife crime control unit), and the Bank pledged USD 200,000 to support it. An experts' group meeting to lay the foundation for the network should take place soon, perhaps in November in New Delhi. Plans are still uncertain, but the network may be organized under the auspices of the South Asia Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Nepal announced that it would double the size of the Bardiya National Park (i.e. extend the park by an additional 900 sq. km), perhaps as early as next week,

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that it would seek legislation increasing the penalty for illegal wildlife trafficking, from 5-15 years to 10-15 years, and that it will deploy enforcement officials to improve wildlife enforcement. Complete conference recommendations are available on the internet at:
www.dnpwc.gov.np/kgtw/recommendation.asp

14. (U) The World Bank sees the Kathmandu tiger workshop as a first step in securing high-level political support for tiger conservation. Two additional meetings to further the workshop's recommendations will take place in 2010, a meeting for ministers from tiger range states that Thailand has agreed to host in Hua Hin January 27-30 and a summit for range state heads of state, which Russia will host in September or October. Conference attendees agreed with the Bank's proposed meetings, but India noted that it will continue with the plans it has already made for the year of the tiger, beginning with a workshop in New Delhi February 14 and including a high-level meeting tentatively set for November.

15. (U) India with Indonesia and Russia, did not request international community financial assistance for its tiger conservation efforts as did other range states. Its delegation made clear that, since it has about 60 percent of the world's remaining wild tigers and a comprehensive program of tiger reserves and conservation measures, it does not need the same kind of basic assistance many range states requested. India noted that after it was discovered in 2005 that no more tigers existed in the Sariska Tiger Reserve, India formed a Tiger Task Force and redoubled its conservation efforts. Those efforts will continue, with adequate financing, and India does not think that it needs to alter its current approach.

16. (U) China's attempt to include in the meetings final recommendations a reference to the possibility of future legal trade in tiger parts was rejected by all other range states. China allows tiger farming, but tiger experts reject legalizing products obtained from farming on the rationale that legalized trade in pelts and parts would provide an unacceptable incentive to consumer demand and would give

motivation to poachers to kill the few tigers remaining in
the wild.
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